UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1998/870
21 September 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 16 SEPTEMBER 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ERITREA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you a letter from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Eritrea addressed to the Secretary-General of the Union of African Parliaments in response to the Union's resolution on the Eritrea/Ethiopia conflict, adopted at its meeting in Niamey, Niger, from 18 to 20 August 1998 (see S/1998/805).

I should be grateful if you would kindly circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Haile MENKERIOS
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

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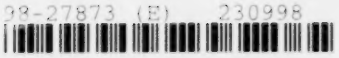

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Letter dated 2 September from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Eritrea addressed to the Secretary-General of the Union of African Parliaments

It is with disbelief that the Government of Eritrea reads the resolution adopted by the thirty-fifth session of the Executive Committee and the twenty first Conference of the Union of African Parliaments, which held its meeting Niamey, Niger, from 18 to 20 August 1998.

The Government of the State of Eritrea takes it for granted that any responsible Pan-African Organization committed to the cause of conflict resolution and the promotion and fostering of peace in our continent, as well the welfare of Africans, will address the issues surrounding any conflict wit seriousness, objectivity and impartiality. It also assumes that any decision and recommendations made will be reached on the basis of the principles of th charter, as well as the decisions of and precedents established by, the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Thirdly, the Government of Eritrea hold the view that the Conference should have independently verified the facts surrounding the conflict rather than depending on the submissions made by onl one party to the conflict before making a determination or issuing a resoluti This could easily have been done by contacting the Government of Eritrea or a of its representatives abroad.

The Government of the State of Eritrea is convinced that, by limiting itself to information supplied and interpretations given to the various documents of OAU, the United Nations and ACP-EU by one of the parties to the conflict, the Conference has not been able to acquire an accurate picture of conflict or the full thrust, purposes and meaning of the various recommendations. It was in fact mislead to reach wrong conclusions.

The Conference was, for example, not fully apprised of the fact that the root cause of the conflict has been the violation of the territorial integrit and sovereignty of Eritrea by Ethiopia; that, in spite of this, Eritrea was determined, and to this day remains determined, to resolve the conflict peacefully on the basis of OAU resolution AHG/RES. 16(2), which sanctifies colonial boundaries, while Ethiopia has rejected that resolution and has adamantly refused to accept complete and unconditional cessation of hostiliti Additionally, the Conference needed to know that Ethiopia declared war on Eritrea on 13 May 1998, imposed an air blockade and maritime access to Eritre ports and is conducting mass expulsion, indiscriminate arrests and arbitrary detentions of Eritreans.

The Government of Eritrea is also convinced that the Conference had not been properly and honestly apprised of the several issues that relate to the conflict. The following points provide compelling evidence:

1. Operative paragraph 2 of the Unions' resolution refers to the "findings" the OAU Ministerial Committee. It would have been to the Conference's advant if it had known that the OAU Ministerial Committee has not yet issued any "findings", since, in the words of the introductory note presented by the Chairman, on behalf of the OAU Ministerial Committee, to the Eritrean and

Ethiopian Ministers on the occasion of the consultations held separately with the two delegations on 1 August 1998 in Ouagadougou: "the Committee of Ministers is at present endeavouring to prepare a set of recommendations, which it hopes will contribute to the search for a peaceful, just and lasting solution ...". The document also stresses that the Committee "shall wholeheartedly endeavour to propose recommendations, which we deem to be fair ...".

This is conclusive and compelling evidence that the Committee had not yet, definitely, at the time of the Conference, made any determination. In this connection, it must be pointed out that the Ministerial Committee is a body created by the Committee of the Heads of State and Government and, consequently, its sole mandate is to submit a report, albeit containing a set of recommendations, to that Committee.

2. The mandate of the facilitators was to submit, to the parties concerned, a framework for the resolution of the conflict which would be acceptable to both parties and not to make recommendations. This too had been made clear by the Eritrean Government on several occasions, including at the OAU summit at Ouagadougou. The Eritrean reservation to this effect had been accepted by the summit.

3. A careful reading of Security Council resolution 1177 (1998) of 26 June 1998 will indicate that it does not in fact endorse "the recommendation of the facilitators".

It is thus erroneous and misleading to suggest that any of these documents warrant the adoption by the Conference of such a partial and arbitrary resolution.

Even worse, the Conference seems to have found it proper to issue a call to the international community on the basis of an allegation included in the resolution of the House of People's Representative of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia. Without giving the allegation the importance it does not deserve, the Eritrean Government wishes to emphatically state that such an action by the Conference is not only myopic and irresponsible, but also jeopardizes the cause of peace. It also casts a grave doubt on the credibility of the Conference and of your organization.

The Government of Eritrea is not worried by the possible investigation of war crimes. It will stand on its record and I hope that you will agree that Ethiopia too will have to stand on its record and be answerable to this and other charges. On the other hand, the Government of Eritrea cannot believe that your organization was unaware of the horrendous human rights violations carried out by the Ethiopian Government, including arbitrary arrests, detentions, deportations and expulsions, as well as the cruel, degrading, humiliating and inhuman treatment of more than 20,000 Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin. That would have singled you out as an exceptionally uninformed member of the international community. That you did not endeavour to balance the resolution by making reference to the several violations of international law by the Ethiopian Government leads the Eritrean Government to question your impartiality.

This is only a fragment of the critical information relevant to the conflict that the Conference needed to possess before rushing to judgement. T Government of Eritrea thus believes that the passing of such a resolution is counterproductive to the promotion of peace that the Conference had hoped to contribute to, and regrets to inform you that such decisions will only encoura Ethiopia to pursue its aggressive policies and continue to violate the human rights of Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin.

The Government of Eritrea takes this opportunity to invite you and other representatives of the African Parliamentary Union to visit both Eritrea and Ethiopia to verify the truth for future purposes.

I should appreciate it if you would kindly bring the present letter to th attention of the participants of the Conference.

(Signed) Haile WELDENSAE
Minister for Foreign Affai